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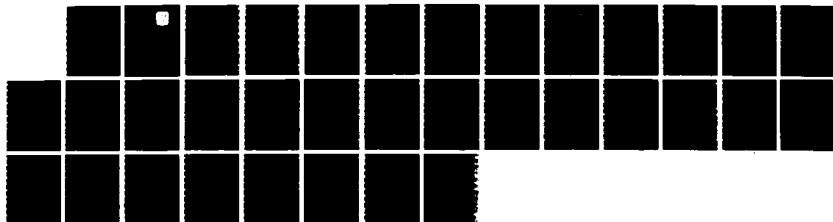
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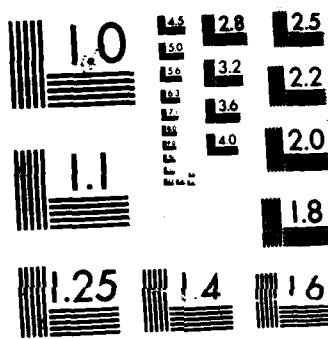
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TERRORISM: THE MILITARY CHALLENGE

BY

LIEUTENANT COLONEL GARY W. NELSON

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TERRORISM: THE MILITARY CHALLENGE

INDIVIDUAL ESSAY

by

Lieutenant Colonel Gary W. Nelson, FA

Professor Gabriel Marcella
Project Advisor

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ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: Gary W. Nelson, LTC, FA

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International terrorism is a matter which touches each and every one of us, it threatens international order and can paralyze democratic nations to the degree that they are unable to respond. Terrorism has become a useful capability for aggressive nations unable to mount a successful military challenge against a militarily superior state. This essay reviews the recent experiences in dealing with this new form of conflict exploring the various elements of power with special emphasis on the role for the military. Furthermore, it discusses the nature of international terrorism, defines the threat and explores the goals of the terrorists. It then traces the evolution of U.S. policy and finally determines the strategic implications for the military to meet the challenge.

Introduction

International terrorism is a matter which touches each and every one of us, it threatens international order and can paralyze democratic nations to the degree that they are unable to respond. Hardly a day goes by without some form of terrorist activity taking place in the world. The drama of the event is vividly brought into our living rooms, inviting us to become a partner to its horror and its tragedy. The saga has been demonstrated time and again with such incidents as the massacre that took place in the 1972 Olympics in Munich, the bombing of the U.S. Marine Headquarters in Beirut in 1983 killing 240 Americans, and the senseless murders of civilians at the Rome and Vienna airports in 1985.

Political violence and terrorism are not new. They have been with us throughout recorded history. What has changed, however, is the speed with which news travels and the scope of the audience to which it is communicated in the world. The terrorist is able to reach any point on the globe to strike any target at any time. Political terrorism was once a national event, held within the confines of national borders. Now any incident has the potential of becoming an international media event. A number of governments are resorting to terrorist tactics, employing terrorist groups, or exploiting terrorist incidents. Terrorism has become a useful capability for aggressive nations unable to mount a successful military challenge against a militarily superior state.

Terrorism is not a recent phenomenon, however, the tactics and the the extent of its use in the conduct of international warfare is a new dimension to the problem. It is a distinct and significant new mode of armed conflict. The United States, understandably, invests heavily against the

contingency of conflict at the high end of the spectrum, however, given recent experience it is more likely to find itself or its allies involved in low-level conflict. The military, if it is to be used in this context, must know its role and be prepared to meet the challenge. This paper will discuss the nature of international terrorism, define the threat and explore the goals of the terrorists, then trace the evolution of U.S. policy and finally determine the strategic implications for the military to meet the challenge.

As a prelude to understanding the magnitude of the problem, following is a chronological list, provided in a task force report on terrorism, of significant terrorist incidents involving U.S. citizens in 1985:

February 2	Greece A nightclub frequented by U.S. servicemen near Athens is bombed. Seventy-eight people are injured including 69 Americans.
April 12	Spain Eighteen people are killed and 37 wounded when a bomb destroys a family restaurant in a suburb of Madrid. Seven Americans are injured.
June 14	Greece TWA Flight 847 is skyjacked by Shi'ite terrorists minutes after takeoff from Athens. The ordeal lasts 17 days. The 145 passengers include 104 Americans.
June 19	El Salvador Four U.S. Marines and two American businessmen are gunned down at an outdoor cafe in San Salvador. A total of 13 people are murdered.
June 23	Over the Atlantic Ocean An Air-India flight explodes over the Atlantic Ocean, killing everyone aboard including four Americans.
August 8	West Germany A powerful car bomb explodes at the U.S. Rhein-Main Air Base near Frankfurt. The blast kills one U.S. airman and the wife of another. Fifteen other Americans are injured. Minutes before the blast, the body of an American soldier

- is discovered near Weisbaden. His identity card has been stolen. Authorities believe the I.D. was used to gain access for the bomb laden car at Rhein-Main Air Base.
- October 7** **The Mediterranean Sea, near Egypt**
The Italian cruise ship Achille Lauro is hijacked by Palestinian terrorists. A 69-year-old American tourist is murdered and thrown overboard. The four terrorists are apprehended when U.S. Navy fighters intercept the aircraft carrying them to safehaven.
- November 23** **Greece**
Egyptair Flight 648 enroute to Cairo is skyjacked 20 minutes after takeoff from Athens. One U.S. Air Force civilian employee is murdered and two other Americans are seriously wounded. A total of 60 persons are killed during the rescue effort.
- November 24** **West Germany**
A U.S. military shopping mall in Frankfurt West Germany is bombed, wounding 32 people including 23 Americans.
- December 27** **Italy**
Rome's airport is attacked by terrorists armed with grenades and automatic rifles. Seventy-three people are wounded, 15 are killed, including 5 Americans. One of the Americans is an 11-year-old girl.
- Austria**
Minutes after the Rome massacre, terrorists strike the Vienna Airport. Three are killed and 41 wounded. Two of the wounded are Americans.
- December 31** **Lebanon**
At the close of 1985, six American citizens continue to be held hostage.¹

Definition of the Problem

Terrorism is a phenomenon that is certainly much easier to describe than to define. Such ambiguity contributes to a lack of international consensus on how to meet the challenge. One could start by saying it is the unlawful use or threat of violence against persons or property to further political objectives. Generally it is intended to intimidate or coerce a government, individuals or groups to modify their behavior or policies. The

range of violence extends from the Tylenol poisonings which generated widespread anxiety among the American population, to activities which include hostage taking, aircraft piracy or sabotage, assassination, threats, hoaxes, and indiscriminate bombings or shootings. Some view terrorism as the lower end of the warfare spectrum, a form of low intensity unconventional aggression. Others refuse to dignify it by referring to it as war, but prefer to believe it to be the lowest form of criminal activity. They feel that if it is treated as a form of warfare, terrorist acts may be placed within the context of accepted international behavior. This argument forms much of the basis of the difficulty in coming to an accepted definition within the international community. One man's terrorist could be another man's freedom fighter, a view most prevalent throughout the Third World. Dr. William Farrell, currently serving as an instructor at the Naval War College and noted specialist on terrorism, suggests the following operational definition:

Terrorism is a purposeful human political activity primarily directed toward the creation of a general climate of fear designed to influence, in ways desired by the protagonist, other human beings and, through them, some course of events.²

Coming up with an acceptable definition has serious implications for developing a strategy within the international community. Labels such as freedom fighter, liberator, or revolutionary does not make aggression against innocent civilians an acceptable form of warfare. The only practical approach available for the civilized world to combat such acts is to hold nations accountable for permitting these activities to take place. It is a problem that faces the United Nations today in developing a more coherent and forceful approach. Actions have been limited to agreements in outlawing the various

manifestations of terrorist activities. The debate is sure to continue as long as terrorism can be an effective tool for many governments to achieve their aims when no other option is available.

The Nature of Terrorism

The next several decades appear ripe for unconventional forms of conflict among nations as the age of great power dominance is replaced by a more fluid pattern of international relations. As power and influence become increasingly diffuse, the traditional mechanisms of restraint are becoming decreasingly effective. It is, therefore, important to understand the nature of the problem in order to develop appropriate policies and strategies to meet the challenge.

Terrorism has definite characteristics which distinguish it from other forms of violence. Its effects are, by its very nature, indiscriminate. No one is safe. This does much to contribute to an atmosphere of fear and helplessness. There are no recognized rules or conventions. Ruthless weapons and methods are used to attack civilians, including foreigners, who are not even remotely involved. Typical methods include bombings, assassinations, massacres, and bargaining with the lives of hostages. As pointed out by Paul Wilkinson, a respected authority on terrorism, "Political terrorism is certainly unpredictable and arbitrary exercising a peculiar kind of tyranny over its victims."³ In the greater totality, the terrorist is pursuing a very coherent strategy with a definite agenda in mind. The unpredictability and arbitrariness of a terrorist action, as seen from the point of view of the victim, is an important component that contributes to the goal of that strategy.

Terrorism seeks to turn an opponent's strength against him. It can

exploit the technological, cultural, and legal infra-structure of a state against that state's own interests. This is particularly successful in cultures such as the United States with strong traditions of personal freedom. In totalitarian societies it is relatively ineffective, the terrorist is simply denied an environment to exist as a matter of state prerogative. To be effective in such a culture, terrorism must be elevated to the level of full-scale revolution.

The West has had generally few successes in the face of terrorist activity. Embassies have been seized and governments have been seen to capitulate in the face of terrorist threats. Since 1972, terrorists have propelled their acts of assassination, hijacking, kidnapping, arson, and bombing into the public eye, paralyzing Western Nations and damaging the credibility of governments. In Munich the terrorist took advantage of the German unpreparedness and mounted an assault on the Olympic village. For a relatively small investment, they relied on television to shock 100 million viewers around the world. At the 1975 Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) ministers' meeting in Vienna, a terrorist act humiliated the Austrian government, making the criminal terrorist, Carlos, a hero of the oppressed, advancing the cause of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) to the forefront of the radical Arab world. In 1979 the seizure of the American embassy in Teheran paralyzed the U.S. for a year and probably had a significant impact upon the presidential election. The failure of the rescue attempt further contributed to the paralysis. The realization has come that no atomic bomb can solve the problem. America failed both diplomatically and militarily to deal with the radical behavior of a nation and with the terrorist tactics of subnational elements. The cost to the credibility of America's power and will has yet to be assessed.

It is clear the role of the media is essential to the terrorist. It provides an enormous political leverage to an act which, on its own, would simply be an example of criminal barbarism. The terrorist uses the media in a way democratic governments cannot, or at least should not. As a result, the governments often appear inept and unable to defend themselves against a relatively small criminal element. Both the government and the terrorists operate in the glare of the media spotlight. Without that attention, the outcome of the incident becomes relatively insignificant.

The militants in Iran recognized this as an essential ingredient in their success and became masters at the art of manipulating the press to their own advantage. By encouraging regular media coverage, the terrorists made the torment of the hostages an integral part of everyone's life. The 54 hostages taken in the 1979 seizure of the American Embassy in Teheran quickly became so well known that any action by the United States that might have jeopardized their lives, would have resulted in severe political consequences.

The media mold public perceptions about the success or failure of the terrorist operation, about the official competence in the face of the threat, and about the abilities of the terrorist organization. Israel's decision to resist escalating terrorist demands and its attempt at a high-risk rescue at Entebbe were depicted by the media as a major triumph. The Germans received the same acclaim at Mogadishu. America's experience in the Iranian desert, on the other hand, was portrayed not only as a failure, but as a symbol of American command weakness and presidential bungling.

While it is agreed the media often exaggerates and sensationalizes incidents, firm support for freedom of the press must be maintained. The

solution is not government imposed restraint. This would only be playing into the hands of the terrorists. The media must serve as their own watch dog. Guidelines have been developed for use during wartime to protect national security, and in some circumstances could be considered appropriate during a terrorist situation.

It is important to note that the media has questioned its own policies in covering terrorist incidents. The coverage of the TWA Flight 847 hijacking in June 1985, where 104 Americans were taken hostage and one was murdered, caused a professional review within the media to re-examine the balance between the goal of informing the public and the vital issue of public security. Individual media organizations have discussed professional reporting guidelines, and ethical standards have been adopted by some members of the press, including television networks. However, there is no industry consensus on either the need for or the substance of such guidelines. The fact remains, the media plays a significant role in the strategy of terrorism, a price which must be paid in a free and open society.

Goals of Terrorism

Provided with an operational definition and some idea of the nature of terrorism, it is important to understand just what the terrorists want to achieve. Ernest Evans, a Research Associate at the Brookings Institute and author of several works on terrorism, suggests that there are five specific tactical goals that a strategy of terrorism seeks to accomplish.⁴

A major goal of many acts of terrorism, as already discussed, is publicity. The terrorist group wants to publicize its cause to both the population in whose interests the group claims to represent as well as to the international community of nations. A number of examples can be cited in which organizations attempted to attract support for themselves. Included are the Red Army Faction, the Bader Meinhof group and the many factions of the Palestine Liberation Organization. All have reinforced their standing and conveyed the message of their cause to the world community after successful terrorist incidents.

A second goal of the terrorist campaign is to intimidate and harass authorities, to make life hard for them so as to force them to make concessions. The terrorist group seeks to deprive the opposition of what it values: material resources, law and order, or just peace of mind. A perfect example of this is the current terrorist activity in France. The nation has had to move to a state of siege to deal with the rash of indiscriminate bombings. They have now restricted access at the borders and continue to expend resources to deal with the potential threats.

A third goal of many terrorist campaigns is to force the polarization of society. Terrorist groups believe that if society can be polarized for and against the status quo, then the anti-status quo forces will be sufficiently

powerful to bring down the regime. In working to divide a society, the terrorist organization has two audience groups: the population as a whole which the group hopes to force to take sides, and the government which the terrorists hope will respond to their acts with increased repression, thereby polarizing the situation. The actions of the Provisional IRA in their calculated provocations of the British Army attempt indirectly to cause repressive measures against the Catholic population of Ulster. They believe that such repressive measures would alienate the Catholic population from the British and give the IRA a mass base of popular support.

A fourth goal of terrorist acts is to aggravate relations between states so as to prevent a set of political events unfavorable to the terrorist group. This has certainly been one of the successful objectives of the terrorist acts of the Palestine movement in worsening relations between Israel and the Arab states. The Palestinians have long feared that the Arab governments might, at some point, come to terms with Israel at their expense and have consequently staged a number of major terrorist incidents to prevent any Arab-Israeli accommodation.

The fifth goal of terrorist actions is the freeing of prisoners and the securing of monetary ransoms. This has been necessary for many groups in order to provide the movement with necessary funds and to free captured comrades. Many nations have remained steadfast in their refusal to accede to such demands and as a result there are still Americans held hostage in Lebanon awaiting resolution of their fate.

The wave of terrorist incidents in recent years has produced a great deal of criticism of terrorist tactics. Such criticism, however, must be seen in the light of its biases and self-serving interests. Many governments are not

immune from employing indiscriminate violence, their real reason for opposing terrorism often is that they oppose social change in general, whether violent or non-violent. This is important to keep in mind when attempting to develop a consensus on an international level to combat the strategy of terrorism.

U.S. Policy

Terrorism is a subject that deeply troubles the American people. They feel, in a sense, angry, victimized, vulnerable and at times helpless. A number of governments are using terrorist tactics, employing terrorist groups or exploiting terrorist incidents. These governments see in terrorism a useful capability to mount an unconventional military challenge against a militarily superior foe. Terrorism provides an "equalizer."

For the United States the problem has been outside its borders. Most of the incidents involving Americans have taken place abroad. Terrorists in Latin America and the Middle East frequently have the erroneous perception that the U.S. controls local governments in their regions and that they can increase their own leverage by kidnapping U.S. officials. American corporations, a symbol of a despised economic system, become lucrative targets. Diplomats, business executives, the military, and American facilities, therefore, have increasingly been targeted by terrorists.

U.S. policy has evolved through experience in combatting terrorism and is an outgrowth of responses by various administrations. In 1972, three weeks after the terrorist attack on the Olympic village in Munich, President Nixon created a Cabinet-Level Committee, chaired by the Secretary of State, to combat terrorism. Later the Carter administration replaced this group with a more responsive program coordinated by the National Security

Council. The program was designed to ensure inter-agency coordination and established the Lead Agency concept for managing terrorist incidents. However, a clear delineation of U.S. policy on terrorism and the development of a coherent strategy to deal with the problem had not been made clear.

A major turning point came with the election of President Reagan. In welcoming home the hostages from Iran, he articulated United States policy on terrorism. He said, "Let terrorist be aware that when the rules of international behavior are violated, our policy will be one of swift and effective retribution." This message was further elaborated upon to include when a terrorist incident against the U.S. is sponsored or directed by a nation, as an instrument of its own policy in an attempt to intimidate or coerce, appropriate measures will be taken- whether diplomatic, political, economic, or military- to resolve the incident and to resist this form of international blackmail. The Vice President was given the mission to chair the administration's crisis management organization supported by appropriate inter-agency working groups.

The first test of this administration's resolve came with the bombing of the U.S. Marine headquarters in Beirut on October 23, 1983. The event clearly demonstrated how governments could effectively use terrorism to achieve their goals and graphically displayed to the United States the dimensions of the problem. The result for the administration was an intense debate in the U.S. demonstrating American vulnerability to this form of attack, and more importantly, its inability to retaliate. It became very clear that rhetoric, committees and passive strategies were insufficient to meet the challenge and that a range of options needed to be developed.

Counter-terrorist strategies can either be active or passive. Defensive

measures appear to have been, for the most part, unsuccessful in containing terrorism. A more active form of deterrence grew out of this event. On April 3, 1984 the President signed a new National Security Directive dealing with terrorism. The Directive is classified, but that same day Secretary of State, George Schultz, delivered a major foreign policy speech addressing terrorism. He described State-sponsored terrorism as a new form of warfare and stated the United States must be prepared to use force in response. He went on to say that the National Security Directive orders the government to develop the options. This, in effect constituted a declaration of war against an unspecified terrorist foe, to be fought at an unknown place and time with weapons yet to be chosen.

The incidents in 1985 clearly demonstrated that terrorism is increasingly directed against the Western democracies. The June 14, 1985, hijacking of TWA Flight 847, the hijackings of Egyptair Flight 648 and the Achille Lauro, the bombing of the restaurant on the outskirts of Madrid frequented by American servicemen and the shooting of the off duty Marine Corps personnel in El Salvador demonstrate that Americans are being specifically targeted. These events have had a significant influence on U.S. Policy.

The publically stated U.S. position on terrorism was unequivocal, firm opposition to terrorism in all its forms whenever and wherever it takes place. The National Security Decision Directives and the statements by the President and senior officials clearly confirmed national policy and it was very clearly stated in the Vice President's Task Force Report:

-- The U.S. Government is opposed to domestic and international terrorism and is prepared to act in concert with other nations or

unilaterally when necessary to prevent or respond to terrorist acts.

- The U.S. Government considers the practice of terrorism by any person or group a potential threat to its national security and will resist the use of terrorism by all legal means available.**
- States that practice terrorism or actively support it will not do so without consequence. If there is evidence that a state is mounting or intends to conduct an act of terrorism against this country, the United States will take measures to protect its citizens, property and interests.**
- The U.S. Government will make no concessions to terrorists. It will not pay ransoms, release prisoners, change its policies or agree to other acts which might encourage additional terrorism. At the same time, the U.S. will use every available resource to gain the safe return of American citizens who are held hostage by terrorists.**
- The United States will act in a strong manner against terrorists without surrendering basic freedoms or endangering democratic principles, and encourages other governments to take similar stands.⁵**

The decision to strike back at terrorism in 1986 came after considerable debate between the Defense and State Departments. The Pentagon feared a military action would escalate hostilities while the State Department called for action in the wake of the events of 1985. The options developed by the Vice President's Task Force included the use of military retaliation for attacks against Americans, but the report was very careful to point out the ramifications of such an option.

Use of our well-trained and capable military forces offers an excellent chance of success if a military option can be implemented. Such use also demonstrates U.S. resolve to support stated national policies. Military actions may serve to deter future terrorist acts and could also encourage other countries to take a harder line. Successful employment, however, depends on timely and refined intelligence and prompt positioning of forces. Counter-terrorism missions are high-

risk/high-gain operations which can have a severe negative impact on U.S. prestige if they fail.⁶

This more aggressive attitude toward dealing with the problem of terrorism obviously grew out of a feeling of frustration and a realization that past efforts have been ineffective. Military options might be considered in cases where the United States has incontrovertible evidence that agents in the employ of a foreign government have carried out a terrorist act, that a government has instigated a terrorist attack or permitted one to occur through willful negligence, or that a government is able to bring the perpetrators to justice but refuses to do so. Military operations could be aimed at limiting a terrorist groups ability to operate, persuading governments sponsoring terrorism to desist, demonstrating to the other governments that the United States is not impotent and that sponsoring terrorism does have its costs. In his address to the nation after ordering the air strikes on Libya, President Reagan said,

We Americans are slow to anger. We always seek peaceful avenues before resorting to the use of force-and we did. We tried quiet diplomacy, public condemnation, economic sanctions, and demonstrations of military force. None succeeded. Despite our repeated warnings, Qadhafi continued his reckless policy of intimidation, his relentless pursuit of terror. He counted on America to be passive. He counted wrong.⁷

Fortunately the military was prepared for this contingency and the will and determination of the nation was present to allow for a successful execution. Libya had been isolated and a credible case had been made linking that nation with the La Belle Disco bombing in West Berlin. The public outrage that ensued concerning the attack was manageable and the United States emerged from the episode with only minor political

repercussions. The risks were enormous and the outcome could easily have been very different. There could have been more civilian casualties or the friendly military losses could have been much greater. Public opinion could have turned this whole operation into a disaster. The operation was an effective demonstration of American capability and resolve contributing to the deterrent strategy.

The recent revelations concerning secret negotiations with Iran exchanging arms for hostages certainly calls into question this hardline no-concessions policy. No single approach to terrorism is inherently wrong, just inherently inadequate to deal with every possible incident and every foe. A counter-terrorism policy built with greater flexibility, greater ambiguity, and toughness only when feasible may ultimately prove far more credible than one built on rhetoric followed by humiliating concession. It is clear, for the short term, the U.S. has lost a great deal of its credibility with its allies. The bottom line may be that there is no overarching strategy against terrorism. No matter what policy we select, it is unlikely our allies will unanimously go along with us. The threat of force is simply not applicable in every terrorist incident, and the threat of retaliation looks empty when we do not go beyond rhetoric. And, in the end, the U.S. loses credibility when it fails to apply its own well-publicized guidelines.

The policy implications of "Irangate" are many. The loss of U.S. credibility with its friends and enemies will have lasting consequences. The policy of constancy and consistency in dealing with global allies is certainly questionable. Much of the President's foreign policy success of talking tough and then acting in pursuit of principles in places like Libya, Grenada and Nicaragua has been eroded. The Presidency has lost the initiative in the

conduct of foreign policy and the Congress is certain to fill the breach.

The prospect for progress in dealing with terrorism has been dealt a very serious blow in the wake of these revelations. Consensus within the international community will be much harder to achieve. It is more likely each nation will pursue its own individual policy. From the perspective of the terrorist, a clear victory has been achieved.

Strategic Implications for the Military

Implementing such a policy is not easy and has significant strategic implications for the military. Terrorist groups field no regular armies. They seldom hold territory. They have no regular economy. Sometimes they have headquarters or training camps at known locations, but these are frequently in the middle of population centers. Terrorists provide few lucrative targets for conventional military attacks. The exact role of military force in countering terrorism requires careful consideration.

The Department of Defense can be viewed as having two roles to play in countering terrorism. First, it must protect its own personnel and resources from attack. Second, within tightly constrained legal parameters, it can render support to efforts by other federal, state and local governments. Legal considerations involving domestic terrorism require some discussion. Constitutional and statutory law severely limits the use of military forces in domestic situations. The authority to order the intervention of federal troops in domestic law enforcement generally rests with the office of the President.

The legal prohibition against the use of military force to execute civil and criminal law is Title 18, Section 1385, of the U.S. Code, Use of Army and Air Force as Posse Comitatus (power of the country). Although this act

prevents the use of federal troops to enforce federal or state laws without constitutional or statutory authorization, it does not prohibit the loan of military material and equipment to federal law enforcement agencies in connection with a continuing civil disorder. Additionally, the President can call into federal service the militia of any state and such armed forces as he considers necessary to suppress "unlawful obstructions, combinations or assemblages or rebellion" against the authority of the United States or any state in particular.

Certain aspects of the law are quite clear. However, there is a degree of ambiguity that has yet to be worked out between the Department of Justice and the Department of Defense in their efforts to coordinate preparations for and response to domestic terrorism. The actions considered center on the use of military force with their civilian counterparts before actual use of the armed forces has been authorized. The Posse Comitatus Act forbids civilian authorities from using the military to carry out their own responsibilities. The other concern for the military is to determine at what point military observers could be sent to the location of an event without violating the law, as well as the legality of pre-positioning of troops to an area for potential use. Court cases stemming from the Wounded Knee incident provide some legal basis for making such preparations in the event the use of federal forces are contemplated. It is clear the use of military force must be an option taken after due consideration of the social, legal and political context of an incident.

Although it is possible that federal troops may be required to counter domestic terrorism, Federal, state and local law enforcement agencies have considerable capability in this area. However, the primary threat, at this

point, seems to be outside U.S. borders where the use of military force may be better suited. Here, the operational concerns become paramount.

In the past several years the U.S. has developed its capabilities for military intervention in trouble spots abroad. After the success of the Israeli raid on Entebbe in 1976 most Western democracies promoted the establishment of specialized elite intervention units. The tragedy of the American experience in the Iranian desert has called into question that capability for the U.S. Despite efforts to improve that capability following the mission, the perceived necessity to shroud that capability in secrecy has produced an unfortunate dilemma. U.S. strategy to combat terrorism is based on the premise of deterrence. Integral to deterrence strategy are capability, credibility, and communication. Secretary of Defense Casper Weinberger expressed his difficulty with this in testimony before Congress when he advised that "describing the country's antiterrorist capabilities might compromise a future operation, but that keeping them secret was preventing him from sending a strong message to potential terrorists."⁸ Having the capability to retaliate or to conduct pre-emptive strikes which may entail either special or conventional operations with some politically important operational requirements requires careful consideration. The risks for undertaking such operations may far outweigh any benefits derived.

There are also many operational concerns in planning and conducting such limited operations. The need for precise target identification and designation places extraordinary demands on intelligence assets. Unless such strikes were preceded by some declaration of belligerent status, the need for surprise probably would preclude the visible build-up of forces,

establishment of advance bases, or obvious deviations from normal flight patterns and frequencies prior to the attack. Emphasis would be on a single, successful mission rather than sustained combat operations. The crucial requirement to minimize casualties among civilian bystanders would require the use of precision ammunition. The need to avoid a POW situation might require the presence of an immediate rescue capability.

There are many dangers which must be kept in mind when contemplating such operations. First, an unnecessarily high military profile may serve to escalate the level of violence by polarizing pro- and anti-government elements in the community. This may place unacceptable restrictions on military resources to produce a successful outcome. Second, there is a constant risk that a repressive over-reaction or a minor error of judgment by the military may trigger further civil violence. Operations of *this nature involve micro-management at all levels*. Furthermore, considerable strain on soldiers often accompanies internal security duties when hostility within a community is directed against them. This has been evidenced by the British in Northern Ireland. Third, anti-terrorist and internal security duties absorb considerable manpower and involve diverting highly trained military technicians from their primary defense role. U.S. forces are already overcommitted. And fourth, there is a very real risk that the civil power may become too dependent upon the military's presence thus prolonging their stay.

Another concern of vital importance for the military is readiness. Engaging in counterterrorist activities takes a significant toll on training. Terrorism, by its very nature, can not be expected. Forces cannot be placed on an alert indefinitely waiting for an incident to take place. Other

commitments must be met. Furthermore, Many forces such as those in support of the NATO mission have certain obligations that must be met. Taking part in a counter-terrorist operation, not fully supported by allies, may have serious repercussions to the alliances. Joint Training exercises may be unilaterally cancelled; basing rights may be called into question; and the possibility of superpower confrontation may result. These are all clear possibilities that must be considered before any decision to use military force.

One last concern is the issue of coordinating the military response with the host country government. Experience with the Libyan raid and with the military efforts in response to the Achille Lauro hijacking, indicates the serious challenges involved when coordinating with the host country. In both cases several countries were involved in providing support to U.S. military forces. Several nations refused such support because of the political consequences both internally and externally. This even involved the refusal to allow U.S. military forces assigned to NATO from participating in such operations. The issue of nationalism often surfaced as well as the concern for repercussions from neighbors sympathetic to terrorist causes. Landing rights for refueling and rearming along with permission to over-fly a country were at issue, which become critical operational considerations. During the Gulf of Sidra operation, routine mail runs were interrupted to the Carrier Task Force because of one nation's internal political problems.

Currently under debate is the problem of stationing special forces close to where they may be needed. These forces have not yet been able to reach an incident in time to make any impact on the outcome. The belief is that they must be forward based to be close to the action. This may save

time, but it compounds the training problem for such a specialized force. Additionally, it does not address the fact that in many of the states where incidents have taken place, the governments did not want the help of such forces.

It is quite clear that any military operation must be undertaken in concert with diplomatic efforts. Military operations cannot be conducted unilaterally with any hope of real success. This may, at times, preclude quick decisive action preferred by the military strategist. However, working together within the international community to focus on the larger objective will contribute to a more lasting victory.

Conclusion

For the United States, at least for now, the problem of terrorism lies outside the borders and there it is a serious problem. Americans more often than not, become the target of many terrorist organizations. Thus, frequently involved, but often on the sidelines unable to affect the outcome of a terrorist event, what can the United States do about international terrorism? Our current approach emphasizes the need for better intelligence; heavier security at our embassies, a declaratory no-concessions policy to discourage terrorists from seizing hostages, effective management of terrorist incidents that do occur; and the creation and use of special anti-terrorist military capabilities as a measure of last resort.

In addition to these defensive measures, efforts continue to obtain international agreements that will deny asylum to terrorism. Since our primary concern is international terrorism, our strategy must be aimed at seeking international cooperation. The United Nations is one forum in which this strategy must be pursued. Because terrorists provide us with few

opportunities for direct attack on them, our approach can only be indirect. This means identifying, isolating, and, hopefully, ultimately modifying the behavior of those states that support terrorists with training, money, weapons or asylum, that now passively tolerate them, or that use terrorist tactics abroad. The world will not simply outlaw international terrorism. However, it may be possible to create a body of international agreements on terrorism each aimed at a specific terrorist tactic. Many nations consider some violent actions a justifiable form of struggle on the grounds that where the end is "national liberation," violence is justifiable as the means, and is not what we regard as terrorism. Despite political differences, there is a great deal of international cooperation in dealing with the problem.

The use of military force is an option to be considered. However, it is important to note, just the fact that a military capability exists increases the temptation for its use. The military option becomes much more appealing to the political decision makers. Clearly the need to call upon the military should not be considered unless regular law enforcement personnel are unable to handle the matter. Since civil authority has the primary purpose of maintaining law and order, and since this has remained a tradition throughout our nation's history, the bringing in of the military is a major policy decision with significant consequences. It must take into account how much force, under whose authority, utilization up to what point, legal and political ramifications and the possible affect upon public opinion. A military response may, in the end, be the exact response desired by the terrorists.

In any terrorist incident, the terrorist has the element of surprise on his side. The choice of time, place and weapons are under his control. The problem will be with us for some time and must be addressed by the world

community. J. Bowyer Bell has provided a very clear view of the situation we are facing when he wrote:

After a decade of dismal terror, there can be few left who are still innocent of the new politics of atrocity and the war waged by tiny "armies" of fanatics bearing strange devices. All now know the long and grotesque litany of massacre: Lod-Munich-Khartum-Rome-Athens-Vienna. Now millions are familiar with the luminous dreams of the obscure South Moluccans and the strange Japanese Red Army, with the fantasies of the Hanafis and the Symbionese Liberation Army, and with the alphabet of death -- PFLP, FLQ, IRA. Carlos-the-Jackal is a media antihero, and Croatia is now found in the headlines instead of in stamp albums. Anyone can be a victim, can ride the wrong airline, take the wrong commuter train or accept the wrong executive position abroad. While opening mail, passing a foreign embassy, standing in an airport boarding line or next to a car, or attending a diplomatic reception, any of us may draw a 'winning' lottery ticket in the terrorist game.⁹

The challenge facing us today is one of re-establishing a credible policy in the wake of the arms for hostage revelations. The policy must accept the realities of the international community as well as the political situation inherent in a democratic society. The international community is at war with the terrorist and must develop strategies which attack the causes as well as the symptoms.

¹ "Public Report of the Vice President's Task Force on Combatting Terrorism," February 1986, (Washington, D.C.:GPO, 1986), pp. i-ii.

² William Regis Farrell, The U.S. Government Response to Terrorism: In Search of an Effective Strategy (Colorado: Westview Press, 1982), p. 12.

³ Paul Wilkinson, "Terrorism Versus Liberal Democracy - The Problems of Response", Conflict Studies, No. 67 (London: Institute for the Study of Conflict, 1976), p. 1.

⁴ Ernest Evans, Calling a Truce to Terror: An American Response to International Terrorism (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1979), P. 8-11.

⁵ "Public Report of the Vice President's Task Force on Combatting Terrorism," p. 7.

⁶ Ibid. p.13.

⁷ "United States Air Strike Against Libya, Address to the Nation," Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents, No. 22, April 21, 1986, (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1986), pp. 491-492.

⁸ The New York Times, February 3, 1981, p. B-13, cited by William Regis Farrell, The U.S. Government Response To Terrorism: In Search of an Effective Strategy (Colorado: Westview Press, 1982), p. 65.

⁹ J. Bowyer Bell, A Time of Terror (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1978), p. 263.

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